

# New Body Armor Vest Will Save Lives

by Debi Dawson

The Army has begun fielding a new body armor vest that is expected to reduce injuries and help save Soldiers' lives by providing them with more protection from bullets and shrapnel.

In early April, Soldiers at Fort Lewis, Wash., received the Improved Outer Tactical Vest (IOTV), which offers an array of design improvements: increased coverage, lighter weight, a quick-release system, and better fit and comfort. The new integrated side plate carriers decrease the vest's profile, and a lower back protector extends the vest's coverage by 52 square inches.

## "This is what we want!"

As the first vests were distributed, Soldiers preparing for deployment to Iraq explained their own involvement in testing and improving the vest. CPT Karl Harness, the S-5 for the 4th Battalion, 9th Infantry, which is part of the 4th Stryker Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division, talked about the test phase. "They brought in four different types of body armor, and put it through the test with several different checks for survivability, maneuverability, weight, all the different kinds of issues that Soldiers normally complain about. Ten male and two female Soldiers got in and out of vehicles, did everything. They said, 'Hey, this is what we want!' Based on their user feedback and comments, the IOTV was decided on."

SGT Sean Morgan, assistant machine gunner, said, "It works pretty well because you don't have to unflap it and open it up. It's a lot better."

SSG Anthony Ducre, squad leader for 4-9, said, "It felt a lot more comfortable than the other two vests that were tested, including the original vest we had."

The IOTV was designed and tested by Program Executive Office (PEO) Soldier. PEO Soldier, headquartered at Fort Belvoir, Va., designs, develops, procures and fields virtually everything today's Soldiers wear or carry. PEO Soldier is committed to increasing combat effectiveness, saving Soldiers' lives and improving Soldiers' quality of life. MAJ Carl Fulmore, PEO Soldier's Assistant Product Manager for Soldier Survivability, said protecting the troops is a big responsibility. "We're fielding equipment to Soldiers that saves their lives. This touches every Soldier on the battlefield."

The new quick-release cord on the front of the vest allows a Soldier to remove the IOTV and its attachments with one pull. The vest then falls to the ground in two pieces and can be put back together in minutes. "This feature would be used by

Soldiers in emergency situations; for instance, being trapped in an overturned or submerged vehicle, and not as a quick way to get out of the IOTV at the end of the day or mission," explained LTC Robert Myles, PEO Soldier's Product Manager for Soldier Survivability.

Medics could use the quick-release feature to treat wounded Soldiers, or they could use an opening on the left shoulder that allows easy access while still providing protection to the patient. Additional noteworthy improvements include a cummerbund that better distributes the weight of the vest and a mesh liner that provides ventilation. "This design significantly decreased the vest's profile and should increase mobility, and we believe mobility equals survivability," Myles said.

"The weight of the IOTV was reduced by eliminating overlap," Myles said. "With the IOTV, we were able to streamline previous improvements. The new vest is higher cut in the armpit area, eliminating the need to attach the axillary protector to the current Deltoid Axillary Protector set. The integrated throat protector provides the same protection as the current attachable version, but more comfortably."



New body armor offers increased coverage, lighter weight and a quick-release system.

The IOTV is a result of research and development that began with a Body Armor Industry Day in the spring of 2006. Seventeen vendors came forward with designs for improved body armor; six were selected to provide prototypes for a Soldier Protection Demonstration at Fort Benning, Ga., in August. Feedback from the demonstration contributed to the development of the IOTV.





At Fort Lewis, Wash, the 4th Battalion, 9th Infantry, part of the 4th Stryker Brigade, 2 ID, were the first Soldiers to receive the IOTV.

The Army expects to provide all Soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan with the IOTV by the end of the year. “This vest epitomizes our continuous efforts to seek the next improvement and to provide our Soldiers the best body armor available—bar none,” said Program Executive Officer Soldier BG R. Mark Brown. “It is live fire tested, and we know it will prove itself in combat.” He noted that the IOTV meets PEO Soldier’s goals of providing troops with the most advanced protective gear available while

also improving comfort and mission effectiveness.

For additional information on PEO Soldier, visit [www.peosoldier.army.mil](http://www.peosoldier.army.mil).



Debi Dawson serves as Strategic Communications Officer, Program Executive Office Soldier.

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